NEW BOOKS.

Valentine and Waldo.

We read about Valentine Lanfrey and Waldo Laurence in Margaret Crosby Munn's story "The Path of Stars" (Dodd, Mead & Co.). These two were dominated by their souls. They felt and suffered intensely. Valentine records that she would have been a sun worshipper if she had lived in Peru in the thirteenth century. She sat at the piano and watched the sunlight that entered in long yellow bars through the closed shutters. After hours of song she had yielded to a natural fatigue, and both she and the piano were now silent. Anybody who may have been in the neighborhood had now an opportunity to think.

Valentine herself thought. She thought of two widely differentiated rooms that had figured in her experience. One was the room in which she now sat exhausted after hours of conscientious musical performance. It was a parlor in Twelfth street, in the neighborhood of the Salmagundi Club and the Thurlow Weed house. It contained particularly an imitation colonial mantelpiece and a portrait of the fair musician's great-grandmother. The other room was the salon of Etelka de Ravatz, the great Hungarian prima donna, in an old palace in Rome. Frescoes dim with age but rich in color distinguished that other room. From its large windows one could see the deep blue of the Italian sky and catch a glimpse of an occasional feature of Roman architecture—a mediæval battlemented tower, perhaps, crumbling with age. In that remote distinguished room the great Liszt had heard Valentine sing and had given her his photograph with praises of her written in his own hand on the back.

Valentine walked out one sunny autumn afternoon. Passing along the west side of Washington Square she was charmed by the beauty of a new studio building of yellow pressed brick. On either side of the carved arched entrance was a tablet of black stone bearing the names of occupants. Reading these idly she came upon the name of Waldo Laurence. She had met him once for five minutes years before in Switzerland. As she studied his name he appeared. He did not recognize her, and she introduced herself. "We met once on the Brunig Pass," she said. Presently she sat down on a stone bench just within the carved arched entrance and fainted. Waldo Laurence humanely bore her to his apartment. When she came to, bars of yellow sunlight fell athwart the rich gloom in which she lay. The room was beautiful and restful. Waldo, sitting sideways on his chair in an attitude of careless ease, was vastly reassuring. "To look at his strong face at that moment was like being received into an abyss of fathomless pity."

An exceptional personality, Waldo. She looked at him with excusable interest. "A modern Praxiteles wandering through one of our American cities in search of a model for a Hermes might have chosen a man of Waldo Laurence's type. Year by year, out of 500, a score perhaps of such youths go forth from our large Eastern universities. Youths whose splendidly modelled heads are set on throats like strong columns; youths who are straight limbed, strong in the shoulders and narrow in the hips; whose serene eyes and strong lips wear the stainlessness of uncorrupted youth; with brows like the Hermes, where thought and beauty reign; whose speech and movement and even laughter carry authority, given not by class room or court room or government, or inheritance, but because genius of some kind has set its seal on them and stamped them for its own."

These twenty live for a time according to their souls, and then according to the requirements of business—all but one. Nineteen go the conventional way; the soul of the twentieth is large enough to preserve him. Waldo was a twentieth youth. Waldo spoke to Valentine when he thought that she was able to support conversation. His voice had vibrations that moved her to tears when he uttered the simple words: "I'm so sorry." He said to her among other things: "One of the hardest things that Love has to learn is that it has to see the Beloved go into some torture room of life, and with all possible willingness, even a passion, to share the agony, it must stay without and let its friend suffer alone. Miss Lanfrey, I have looked into the window of the souls of suffering or disappointed human beings until the need to relieve them became more pressing than any I have ever known. Will you let me see you often and do for you what I can?"

Valentine went with her brother Arthur to a great concert where the Seventh Symphony was played nobly. "Through the sombre majesty of the introduction, through the tender melancholy of the allegretto, on through the rush of the presto to the triumph of the last movement, there seemed to be an ascending scale of emotion and faith." It left Arthur with pale face, wide eyes and tremulous lips. Waldo also was there. When the concert was over the three set out together to walk home. At Union Square Arthur took off his hat, threw up his arms, and drew a long breath. "Oh, what a night! what a night!" he cried. "One should be on a boat floating on the surface of some black stream, shut in by a dense foliage, with just a rift here and there to let the sky shine into the water!" Regarding the fathomless vault above, he continued: "Oh, ye innocent stars!" Then turning to his sister: "Heavens, Valentine, how beautiful you are!"

They went to St. Augustine's Church, and there in the dark Arthur played the organ, and Valentine sang Beethoven's solemn melody "In This Dark Tomb." As Arthur held the last A with the bass pedal he struck a match and lighted the gas jet over the organ keyboard, and Waldo continued the impressive performance. Valentine records, speaking of Waldo: "Bending, as if swayed by a force stronger than himself, he kissed my hand—a light yet long and fiery touch, as if the velvet petals of a rose had suddenly become alive and glowing." Then Arthur, whose stormy mood had passed, played dream like music, and Waldo and she talked. "There were two little biographers briefly sketched to the accompaniment of Arthur's music." Waldo's people were from Maine and Massachusetts. "From his account of them they had been of a powerful and intellectual type. College presidents, a Bishop, noted lawyers and several authors of books, both rare and witty, were numbered among them." Valentine was from warmer latitudes. "The history of my ancestry," she records, "was on simpler lines. Of pure French descent on my father's side and of Irish on my mother's, transplanted into Southern soil in 1690, and living there with much freedom and luxury, our race was romantic, imaginative, impulsive; loyal and truthful—honorable almost to a fault." This while the organ softly played. They went home at midnight.

An "after word" speaks of Waldo and Valentine as having lived their lives together for ten years and as being among those who have caught "God's secret" and are blessed and distinguished in other ways enumerated by Browning. They have one child, whom, not remarkably, the mother adores. The publishers' notice calls this as "a story full of musical rhapsodies, romantic love, poetry, and passion perhaps of an intellectual kind." That is an accurate description, as may be judged from the outline that we have afforded.

America in Old Clothes.

American antiquarians and collectors are indebted to Mrs. Alice Morse Earle for several pleasant books describing the homes, gardens and belongings of their forefathers. In the two volumes of "Two Centuries of Costume" (Macmillans) she takes up dress, male and female, in the utmost detail, or as the advertisements put it, "from hat to shoe." Her centuries end with 1820, and she has scoured the whole Atlantic coast, north and south, for specimens. There are many illustrations, and many a famous worthy is presented merely for the clothes on his or her back. One portrait alone makes the book worth having, our old friend Ward Nicholas Boylston, in his cap and slippers and flowered dressing gown, as he has smiled down for years on would-be Harvard freshmen, first in old Harvard Hall and now in Memorial. There is perpetual encouragement in that smile, even with a geometry paper before one, and we hold it as rather unkind of Mrs. Earle to call attention to the tenuity of the old fellow's shanks.

Books for Girls.

Pleasant scenes of country life and some humor make up for the glaring crudity of parts of "Aunt Jimmy's Will," by Mabel Osgood Wright (Macmillans). Two or three of the characters are so well drawn and some of the incidents so well told that we can but regret that the story is made so melodramatic. We deplore the introduction of the heroine to slum life, which is wholly unnecessary.

Half a dozen good stories, some really for grown up girls, are included in Mrs. Laura E. Richards's "The Green Satin Gown" (Dana Estes & Co.). There is the right open air feeling in the tale of the young woman on snowshoes, and an old-time charm in the title story. The factory incident is rather unpleasant.

The oft told tale of Flora Macdonald and Prince Charlie is told over again in "A Lassie of the Isles," by Adele E. Thompson (Lee & Shepard). Perhaps it was time that it was told again.

There are two undesirable topics in "A Daughter of the Rich," by M. E. Waller (Little, Brown & Co.). One is the contrast between rich and poor, the other a sentimental love story, neither of which has any place in books for the young. The introduction of a city girl to country life and to a houseful of nice country children brings out scenes, however, that make up for this and that are enjoyable.

Another book on much the same theme, an eight-year-old girl from the town meeting with the country and with country children for the first time, is Elizabeth Hill's "My Wonderful Visit" (Charles Scribner's Sons). The story is told in the first person and with some humor.

There seems to have been a series of "Elsie" books, and it must have been a pretty long one. At least in "Elsie and Her Loved Ones," by Martha Finlay (Dodd, Mead & Co.), Elsie, if we understand aright, has become a grandmother and takes a trip to California. This introduces some valuable guide book information and some historical narratives the revelancy of which we have not discovered. It would take a genealogical expert to understand the Elsie family introduced in the first few pages.

Children must put up with perfunctory stories as well as older readers. Of these we have "The Girl Who Kept Up" (Lee & Shepard), a tale of high school life and love, by Mary McRae Culter; "Gipsy Jane" (Dana Estes & Co.), melodrama for the young, by Harriet A. Cheever, and "Dorothy's Playmates" (Lee & Shepard), a harmless story for small readers by Amy Brooks.

A Family of Funny Men.

The older generation may recollect Gilbert à Beckett, Thackeray's "à Beckett the beak," the estimable police magistrate who was one of *Punch's* founders and wrote the punning text for John Leech's pictures to the "Comic History of England" and of "Rome" and to the "Comic Blackstone." Puns were his chief ammunition, and it is very likely that to his baleful example the later "funniness" of *Punch's* text is due. He died half a century ago, and left sons, one of whom, Mr. Arthur William à Beckett, has also contributed to *Punch* and to other comic journals, and who now offers his reminiscences in

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